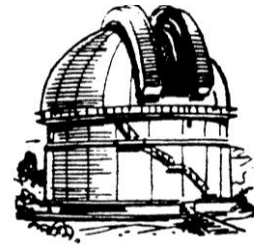

Journal

of the



Nottingham Astronomical Society

April 2006

Inside this issue

- Sky Notes for April
- Observatory Opening and 60th Anniversary Lunch
- Diary Dates
- Advertisements
- E-Services
- Membership application form
- Society Information

Thursday April 6th

Tonight we have an

Observatory Evening

from 7.30 p.m.

(there will be no meeting at the City Academy this month)

GLOBULAR CLUSTERS IN THE SPRING SKY

Spring is an excellent time of year for observing globular clusters, which are some of the most beautiful deep-sky objects visible through modest-sized telescopes. Four of the best, which are well-placed for observation from the UK, are

M3 in **Canes Venatici**, a magnitude 5.9 object containing half a million stars.

M5 in **Serpens Caput**, at magnitude 5.7 the fifth brightest of all globulars.

M13, also magnitude 5.7, in **Hercules**, famous as the 'Great Globular Cluster', with up to a million stars in a space about 140 light-years across.

M92, also in **Hercules**, but magnitude 6.5, is perhaps regarded as the poor relation of M13, but is nevertheless a fine object to observe.

Sky Notes

2006 March

Compiled by Roy Gretton

All times quoted are U.T.



PHASES OF THE MOON

First Quarter occurs at midday on April 5th
Full Moon occurs in the afternoon of the 13th
Last Quarter occurs in the early hours of the 21st
New Moon occurs in the early evening of the 27th

This month the Moon is closest to Earth on the 25th, and furthest from Earth on the 9th.

THE PLANETS

Mercury is not well placed for observation for this, the second month in succession. It rises barely half an hour before the Sun.

Venus, at magnitude -4, is brilliant object low in the south-east before sunrise. But like Mercury it is difficult to observe due to its southerly declination, and it rises less than one hour before sunrise. Throughout April the planet will be receding toward the far side of the Sun.

Mars will be moving eastwards through the constellation of Gemini this month. On the nights of April 17th and 18th the planet will be about half a degree north of the attractive open cluster M35, providing an interesting view at low magnification. The Martian disk is now little more than 5 arcseconds across, so don't expect to see any surface details.

Jupiter is approaching its best viewing position of the year, as opposition to the Sun occurs early in May. By the end of April the planet will be visible for the whole of the night as a magnitude -2.4 object in the constellation of Libra, about 24 degrees above the southern horizon. For some years after 2006, Jupiter will be less-well placed for observation from the UK, as it will move even further south.

Saturn, still close to M44, the Beehive cluster in the constellation of Cancer, continues to be a worthwhile object to observe in the evening. Its magnitude is +0.2. Its largest satellite, Titan, may be seen due west of the planet on April 11th and 27th, and due east on the 3rd and the 19th.

Uranus and **Neptune** are unobservable this month.

METEORS

The advent of the Lyrids, with their maximum activity on the night of April 22-23rd, brings to an end a three-month period during which there were virtually no observable showers. Conditions are favourable for observation this year, as the Moon will interfere very little. The radiant is about 10 degrees southwest of the bright star Vega. A maximum observed rate of about 8 meteors per hour, about one hour after midnight, may be expected.

**Nottingham Astronomical Society
Observatory Opening and 60th Anniversary Lunch
Saturday, 13th May 2006**

Here is the timetable of events on the day:

- 10.30 am** **Coffee** (free of charge) at **The Lime Kiln Inn, Colston Road, Cropwell Bishop**
- 11.15am** **Opening Ceremony** at the **NAS Observatory, Cotgrave Reservoir**
- 12.30pm** **Buffet Lunch** at **Cotgrave Place Golf Club**

Our guests will be Professor Mike Merrifield and Mrs Merrifield.

All current and past NAS members and their spouses, partners, children, relatives and friends are very welcome to attend **any** or **all** of these events.

If you wish to come to the buffet lunch, the cost is £15.95 per head, with a deposit of £5 each.

A copy of the menu is available at NAS meetings.

*For those attending the lunch, please note that payment of the balance is due at the meeting on **Thursday 4th May** - cheques payable to 'Nottingham Astronomical Society'.*

DIARY DATES 2006

Meetings of the Nottingham Astronomical Society

Our programme of monthly meetings is below. Don't forget to check our website:
<http://beehive.thisisnottingham.co.uk/nottinghamastro>
for the latest information about the Society's activities.

Thursday 6 April

NAS observatory site, from 7.30pm

Observatory Evening

Do please come along and help prepare the observatory for the official opening
E-mail for directions: nottinghamastro@yahoo.co.uk
(No meeting at Djanogly in April)

Thursday 4 May

Djanogly City Academy, Room 105
doors open 7.30pm

The Galactic Centre – a hidden treasure

Dr Susan Cartwright
Sheffield University

Saturday 13 May

Observatory site, near Cotgrave

NAS Observatory Opening Ceremony

Observatory to be opened by Professor Michael Merrifield
followed by a

Buffet Lunch at Cotgrave Place

(Further details to be announced at NAS meetings)

Thursday 1 June

This meeting will be held at
The British Geological Survey, Keyworth

Doors open 7.30pm

The Magnetism of Sunspots

David Boyce
University of Leicester

Thursday 6 July

Djanogly City Academy, Room 105
doors open 7.30pm

Members' Evening

Bring along your solar eclipse pictures!

DIARY DATES: Other Events

National Space Centre
Exploration Drive, Leicester
8 - 23 April 2006
MARS 3D

A unique chance to view high resolution images from recent missions to Mars. See the amazing landscapes of our closest neighbour and discover how our understanding of the red planet has been transformed since the days when man first started to look at Mars through Earth-bound telescopes. These stunning images, from over 35 million miles away, were collected by the NASA Mars rovers, Spirit and Opportunity and Mars Express.

Times: Throughout the day. Free to ticket holders.
(National Space Centre tickets: Adult £9.95, Child/ Student /Senior Citizen £7.95)
Details & opening times: www.spacecentre.co.uk Phone 0116 261 0261

Astroblast 2006
Saturday 22nd April 2006
10.00am to 4.00pm
Institute of Astronomy
Madingley Road, Cambridge

There will be a wide range of talks, activities and displays, with Anton Vamplew (from the Royal Observatory, Greenwich) and Terry Pratchett, ('Discworld' Author). Tours of the historic telescopes, practical hands-on sessions, Stardome Planetarium, and an assortment of trade stands and astronomy society displays. Visit the BBC Sky at Night team while you're there!

Visit www.astroblast.org.uk for further details, directions and parking advice.

Received from Sunderland Astronomical Society:
4th KIELDER FOREST AUTUMN STAR CAMP

Northumberland
18 - 22 October 2006

"I'm pleased to give you first details of the 2006 Kielder Forest Autumn Star Camp. It will be staged over five nights from 18 to 22 October 2006 in the spectacular Border countryside - the darkest area of England according to a CPRE study.

Once again, the Forestry Commission and Sunderland Astronomical Society have joined forces to organise the event, which is based at Kielder Campsite. The main day will be **Saturday 21 October** at nearby 18th century Kielder Castle. We will have top speakers and a full line-up of the nation's leading astronomy vendors, together with events for novices.

During the winter, the Forestry Commission plan to undertake improvements to the drainage and hard standings on the electric hook-up side of the campsite. Hopefully, it will make the site somewhat more water-resistant. Pitch fees have been kept at £12 per night for an electric hook-up and £10 without (per pitch, not per person). There's also a minimum two night stay. Activities on the main day will be free of charge to those registered and we will also provide a warm room. Other free talks and workshops will be arranged before the main day, after the success of those staged at the 2005 event.

We also have something new to tell you - a Spring Star Camp, set to be staged over three nights from **21 to 23 April 2006**. This is being organised by Sunderland Astronomical Society, who have block-booked Kielder Campsite. It's not meant to compete with our Autumn event, but rather offer a friendly observing weekend before summer arrives. Pitch fees are from £8 and **booking should be made directly with Sunderland Astronomical Society**.

You can find more details on both star camps and how to book at www.richarddarn.demon.co.uk/starcamp. If you require any further information, please contact me at starcamp2006@richarddarn.demon.co.uk, or call **01226 246351**. We hope to see you again under Kielder's dark sky!"

Richard Darn, Sunderland Astronomical Society

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Small Advertisements

For Sale

Maksutov 6-inch by Drew. 2x2-inch finderscopes, equatorial tripod mount with circles, eyepiece tray, carry box. Selection of eyepieces, Barlow lens, star diagonals.

Buyer collects. **£495** for prompt sale.

**Telephone Peter Davison
on 0115 923 0040**

For Sale

**8³/₄-inch Newtonian telescope on
Dobsonian mount**

Built by David Lukehurst.
65x and 250x eyepieces, finderscope.
3 years old.
Hardly used, very good condition.

£375 or near offer

**Telephone Terry Naylor
on 0115 9815968**

The Nottingham Astronomical Society: E - SERVICES

'Beehive' Website

Whether or not you are a NAS member, you can now keep up to date with details of the Society's meetings and other events by visiting the NAS 'Beehive' website:

<http://beehive.thisisnottingham.co.uk/nottinghamastro>

NAS Journal e-mailing list

To register for your monthly e-mailed copy of the NAS Journal, just e-mail

nottinghamastro@yahoo.co.uk

You don't have to be a Society member to take advantage of this service.

NAS Observatory Group

A web group page and message service (for NAS members only) is available at

<http://uk.groups.yahoo.com/group/nottinghamastronomicalsociety/>

It is used for circulating information to members about work at the observatory and use of the large telescope. If you are a member of the Society, you can join this online group by visiting the website and clicking on "Join this Group".

Nottingham Astronomical Society

The Nottingham Astronomical Society, and/or the Editor accept no responsibility for any errors that may occur within this publication. Any views expressed in the NAS Journal are those of the individual authors and not necessarily endorsed by the Nottingham Astronomical Society, its Committee or Members.

APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP

If you would like to join the Nottingham Astronomical Society, please complete and tear off this slip. Make your cheque/postal order payable to:

THE NOTTINGHAM ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY

Then send the slip and payment to Paul Stocks, Hon. Secretary, **Nottingham Astronomical Society**, 22 Killerton Park Drive, West Bridgford, Nottingham, NG2 7SB

Alternatively you may hand the slip and payment to the Secretary or Treasurer at one of the Society's regular meetings.

Your name _____

Full address _____

_____ Postcode _____

I wish to join the Nottingham Astronomical Society and enclose the membership fee for

(please tick appropriate box)

- Full Adult £25
- Junior (17 years or under) £12.50
- Concession (*full time student, UB40, etc*) £12.50

Nottingham Astronomical Society

Affiliated to the British Astronomical Association
Member of the Federation of Astronomical Societies
Member of the Society for Popular Astronomy
Supporters of the Campaign for Dark Skies
Registered Charity No: 1066645

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e-mail: fwmh@nerc.ac.uk

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Alan Heath (Ex. Dir. BAA Saturn Section)

VICE PRESIDENTS:

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Duncan Collins

e-mail: duncan.collins@talk21.com

ORDINARY COMMITTEE MEMBERS:

Joe Sowerby

Dorothy Sowerby

Meetings

Formal monthly meetings, with speakers, are held on the first Thursday of each month (except August, and occasionally other months as announced) at

Djanogly City Academy, Room 105

Sherwood Rise, Nottingham NG7

Doors open	7.30pm
Meetings Start	7.45pm
Meetings end	10.00pm

Non-members are very welcome at our meetings and there is no charge for the first meeting. We make a small charge of £2.50 adults, £1.25 juniors to non-members after their first attendance. Invited guests are admitted free of charge.

Annual Subscriptions, 2005-06

Full Adult:	£25
Junior (<i>17 years or under</i>)	£12.50
Concessions	£12.50

(*Full time student, UB40, etc*)

Subscriptions become due on 1 October. Half-price subscription is charged if joining after 1st April. Please make cheques payable to:
Nottingham Astronomical Society.

If you would like further information about the **Nottingham Astronomical Society**, or would like to become a member, please contact the Honorary Secretary, Paul Stocks, at the address given above, or speak to any NAS committee member at one of the regular monthly meetings. A membership application form appears inside this issue of the Journal.
